The Role of Quality Assurance in Sustainable Programme Design

Susanna Lee
Head of Consulting, HKCAAHQ

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Content

• Background (DESD) 2005-2014
• Education for Sustainable Development (SD)
• Higher Education (HE) sustainability Initiative
• Education 2015-2030
• HESD in UK
• SD and HESD in HK
• Quality Issues and Factors: HK and UK Experience
• Internal Quality Assurance
• Observations
• External Quality Assurance Principles
Background

• A Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) 2005-2014

  – UN General Assembly Resolution 57/254 (2012)
  – Integrate the principles, values and practices of SD into all aspects of education and learning, to address
    ▪ Social
    ▪ Economic
    ▪ Cultural
    ▪ Environmental issues
    in the 21st century
Background ...2

• One of the four priority areas of action
  – Reorient and revise education programmes from nursery school to university to include explicitly the study and comprehension of problems linked to sustainability of our planet, emphasising interdisciplinary approaches (UNESCO, 2005a: 3-4)
  – To cover a wide spectrum of strategic perspectives:

- Socio-cultural perspectives
  - Human rights
  - Peace and human security
  - Gender equality
  - Cultural diversity and intercultural understanding
  - Health
  - HIV/AIDS
  - Governance

- Environmental perspectives
  - Natural resources (water, energy, agriculture, biodiversity)
  - Climate change
  - Rural development
  - Sustainable urbanisation
  - Disaster prevention and mitigation

- Economic perspectives
  - Poverty reduction
  - Corporate responsibility and accountability
  - Market economy
Education for Sustainable Development

• For learners to acquire the skills, capacities, values and knowledge required to ensure sustainable development;
• at all levels and in all social contexts (family, school, workplace, community);
• To foster responsible citizens and promote democracy;
• on the principle of life-long learning;
• To foster individual’s balanced development.

UNESCO (2005)a
Sustainable Development in Higher Education

- Higher Education sustainability Initiative
  - Teach SD across all disciplines of study
  - Encourage research and dissemination of SD knowledge
  - Green campuses and support local sustainability efforts
  - Engage and share information with international networks

https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdinaction/hesi
Education 2015-2030

- Incheon Declaration
  - Transform lives through education, which serves as a main driver of development
  - Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 4)
    - Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
    - More oriented to outcomes
    - Universal secondary completion and equal access to tertiary education
    - Improvement in skills needed for decent jobs
    - Acquiring SD knowledge
    - Aligns with an explicit lifelong learning framework
SD in Higher Education in UK

• 2005 policy paper
  – Securing the Future: delivering the UK sustainable development strategy

• Research
  – SD in HE: current practice and future developments. (Dawe et. al., 2005)

• Guidance document
  – outcomes-based framework for use in curricular design and approach to teaching, learning and assessment
SD in HK

- **Environment Bureau**
  - support to the Council for Sustainable Development:
    - finding ways to increase prosperity and improve the quality of life while reducing overall pollution and waste;
    - meeting HK’s needs and aspirations without doing damage to the prospects of future generations; and
    - reducing the environmental burden that HK puts on its neighbours and helping to preserve common resources
  - SD awareness
    - Publicity and community education programmes
## SD in HE in HK

### Table 1: Post-secondary and Tertiary Education Programmes with Elements of Sustainability and Sustainable Development as of end June 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Levels#</th>
<th>Number of Programmes</th>
<th>Mode of Delivery</th>
<th>Quality Assurance*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>FT</td>
<td>PT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Degree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor Degree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s Degree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate Certificate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate Diploma</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>total</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Legend:**

- FT - full-time; PT - part-time;
- NLP: non-local learning programme registered / exempted from registration under Non-local Higher and Professional Education (Regulation) Ordinance (“Cap 493”)

* Self-accrediting operators listed in Schedule 2 of Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Ordinance (“Cap 592”); other non-self-accrediting operators are subject to accreditation tests conducted by the Accreditation Authority named in Schedule 1 of the Ordinance.

#Examples of the programmes are Associate Degree in Visual Communication Design and Sustainability, Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Environment and Sustainable Development and Master of Science in Sustainable Urban Development

*Source: HKQR*
### Table 2: Spread of Programmes by Areas of Study and Training (note 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas of Study and Training (Primary)</th>
<th>Number of Programmes</th>
<th>Areas of Study and Training (Others) (note 2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01. Architecture, Construction and Town Planning</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04. Biological, Physical and Mathematical Sciences</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Education, Teacher Training and Sports Science</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Engineering and Technology</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Fine Arts, Performing Arts, Design and Creative Media Art &amp; Industry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Recreation, Leisure, Tourism and Hospitality</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>total</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note 1:** There are 21 Areas of Study and Training under the HK Qualifications Register

**Note 2:** Area 11. Engineering and Technology is also claimed as other Area of Study and Training for two programmes under Area 01.
Quality Issues Identified from HK Accreditation Experience

• Curriculum Content, Intended Learning Outcomes and Assessment Strategies
  – review of the Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) of the specialised study of the programme to show the following in the revised programme document:
    ▪ The revised ILOs are specific, measurable and achievable and comply with the appropriate level of competency required at the relevant HKQF Level
    ▪ Close alignment of the revised ILOs, graduate attributes, curriculum content and assessment strategies.
Quality Issues Identified from HK Accreditation Experience ... 2

• Academic Leadership and Staffing Matters
  – strengthening the academic leadership by appointing a Programme Manager
  – adequate numbers of suitably qualified teaching staff
  – close monitoring of the full-time-to-part-time staff ratio
  – communication with, and close monitoring of, the part-time teaching staff to ensure quality and consistency of teaching and learning
  – to include teaching and learning workshops and research activities in staff development to inform teaching
Quality Issues Identified from HK Accreditation Experience ... 3

• **Student Support**
  – provision of additional support to students in planning, conducting and writing up their Dissertation

• **Facilities**
  – provision of programme specific facilities and studios

• **Partnership and Internal Quality Assurance**
  – expansion of partnership
  – establishment of an advisory group
  – Terms of Reference of committees in the QA Manual for transparency
UK Experience - Quality Factors
Curriculum Design and Teaching, Learning and Assessment

• Teaching and Learning
  – Educators as role models and learners, putting sustainability principles into practice.

• Experiential learning by reconnecting to real-life situations

• Holistic thinking
  – more open-ended exploration of interdependency and transdisciplinary connections between subjects as well as including approaches to developing and honing critical thinking

(Dawe et. al., 2005)
UK Experience - Quality Factors ... 2
Curriculum Design and Teaching, Learning and Assessment

• Curriculum Boundary
  – Best practice examples:
    ▪ Those subjects extending the boundaries of their discipline to include other unrelated disciplines e.g. sciences and humanities
    ▪ Those subjects having a close and continuing association with their institution’s environmental processes and practices
UK Experience - Quality Factors ... 3
Curriculum Design and Teaching, Learning and Assessment

• Barriers and Solutions to Embedding ESD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barrier</th>
<th>Solution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crowded curriculum</td>
<td>Create space through a rigorous review of existing curricula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrelevance</td>
<td>Development of credible teaching materials which are fully contextualised and relevant to each subject area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited staff awareness and expertise</td>
<td>Significant investment in staff development and capacity building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited institutional commitment</td>
<td>Develop a credible business case for HE institutions, setting out triple bottom line benefits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Review and amend institutional mission and policy statements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Internal QA for the Development of SD Programmes

• Good Practices
  – Quality management
    ▪ Quality Assurance + Quality Enhancement
  – Holistic quality process
  – Added value of quality processes
  – Incorporating sustainability agenda into validation / periodic review
    ▪ Collegial
    ▪ Sustainability as strategic target be reflected in programme / award development
  – Staff development
### Hurdles and Solutions to Sustainability Programme Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hurdles</th>
<th>Solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overloading the programme development and validation process when over-emphasising the importance of sustainability</td>
<td>Quality assurance professionals / validation panels adopt a facilitating approach with the programme development teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validation panels adopt a “box-ticking” mentality</td>
<td>Focus on the transformative effect on students rather than treating programme validation as a paper exercise</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Observations

• SD in HE
  – New initiative, particularly in HK
  – Limited HK experience
  – UK experience - more support at systemic level
  – Other Quality issues
    ▪ Collaboration of stakeholders to address transdisciplinary issues
    ▪ Instituted formally in the quality assurance process and at management decision-making level
    ▪ Establishment of interdisciplinary committee
      ➢ Programme development, management, pedagogy, QA
Observations ... 2

- **Sterling (2004), SD in HE**
  - Change of fundamental epistemology in our culture
  - Not → add-on to existing structures and curricula
  - Therefore, also in our educational thinking and practice
    - Curriculum
    - Pedagogy
    - Organisational change
    - Policy
    - Ethos
  - Education → sustainable education (Sterling, 2001)
External Quality Assurance Principles

- **Internal Quality Assurance**
  - Cornerstone

- **External Quality Assurance (EQA)**
  - Learner-centred philosophy to guide execution
  - Enabling process
  - Fitness for purpose
  - An EQA model that fits the purpose and reflects the HEI’s competency at different phases of its development and rewards its quality achievement

(Fan and Lee, 2012)
Thank you

slee@hkcaavq.edu.hk

www.hkcaavq.edu.hk